Rankin Named Counsel for Assassin Probers

By Laurence Stern
Staff Reporter

Former U.S. Solicitor General J. Lee Rankin was named yesterday as chief counsel for the Presidential Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy.

Chief Justice Earl Warren, chairman of the special panel, announced Rankin's appointment and said he "is now in the performance of his duties."

Rankin and the Chief Justice are old courtroom acquaintances. As Solicitor General from 1956 to 1961, Rankin was the Government's top lawyer in cases before the Supreme Court.

A slight, soft-spoken man of 56, Rankin is the first staff appointee hired by the presidential panel. The announcement described him as a "distinguished lawyer."

A spokesman for the Commission announced that each of its seven members has received copies of the five-volume FBI report on the Nov. 22 assassination of President Kennedy and the subsequent murder of the suspected assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

The FBI report does not flatly assert that Oswald was the President's assassin, according to informed officials. But it does recite a mass of circumstantial evidence that, in the view of investigators, points to Oswald as the fatal sniper beyond reasonable doubt.

Physical evidence in the case—Oswald's Italian carbine rifle, his revolver, three spent cartridges from the assassination scene, a shirt, fingerprints and several documents—are under lock and key in the FBI laboratory here.

This evidence is available to the Commission on request.

Oswald's fingerprints and palm prints have been recovered from the Italian carbine rifle, a 6.5 mm. Mannlicher Carcano, that ballistics tests showed to be the assassination weapon, authorities reported.

Additional prints were found on a box at the sixth-floor sniper post from which the fatal volley was fired and on the wrapping paper in which Oswald carried the murder weapon into the Texas School Book Depository Building.

Another link in the circumstantial chain of evidence were shreds of material found in metal parts of the murder weapon that microscopic examination showed to have come from a brown shirt Oswald was wearing when he was arrested.

The bulky FBI report consists of two volumes of narrative, developed in chronological form, and three separate volumes of supporting evidence, principally photographs and documents.

A Commission spokesman said yesterday that "no further announcement will be made concerning the report until the Commission had an opportunity to review it. A preliminary statement will thereafter be made public."

It was understood from official sources that the FBI refrained explicitly from naming Oswald as President Kennedy's assassin. There is considerable sensitivity on this point because of criticisms surrounding the handling of the case by Dallas police.

The final responsibility for passing verdict on Oswald rests with Chief Justice Warren and his investigating Commission, authorities say.

In another development the House yesterday passed and sent to the White House a measure granting subpoena powers to the Warren Commission. The Senate passed an identical measure Monday.

The resolutions also grant the Commission authority to grant witnesses immunity from future prosecution as a result of their testimony. This step is designed to encourage witnesses to talk who might otherwise decline to testify on grounds of possible self-incrimination.

Belmont
Mohr
Tolson
Callahan
Conrad
DeLoach
Evans
Gale
Rosen
Sullivan
Tavel
Trotter
Tele Room
Holmes
Gandy

I just can't understand how some of these details never known before are leaked to the press.
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The Washington Post and Times Herald
The Washington Daily News
The Evening Star
New York Herald Tribune
New York Journal-American
New York Mirror
New York Daily News
New York Post
The New York Times
The Worker
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